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ABSTRACT

This is one of a series which focuses on innovations in the training and supervision of counselors. It discusses micro-counseling by providing: (1) a definition of the procedure; (2) a description of models of practice; (3) a discussion of the effects of using micro-counseling; (4) suggestions for possible applications of the procedure; and (5) steps to follow when designing micro-counseling experiences. A bibliography is included. (Author)

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PERSONNEL SERVICES
REVIEW

SERIES 1

Innovations in the Training And Supervision of Counselors

MICRO-COUNSELING

ED 036 672

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PERSONNEL SERVICES REVIEW

Series 1
"Innovations in the Training and Supervision of Counselors"

Micro-Counseling

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FORWARD

The Personnel Services Review is an ongoing publication Series which has been developed by CAPS to inform personnel workers about new developments in a number of personnel services areas. There will be several different series of the Personnel Services Review. Each series will focus on a broad area of personnel work practice. Within each series there will be a number of specific issues (varying from five to ten depending on the series). Each of these issues will concentrate on a specific practice, procedure or method. The goal of these publications is to enable the reader to: (1) become aware of a practice; procedure or method; (2) learn about the ways in which this practice has been applied by others; (3) understand the underlying theory behind the practice; (4) consider possible applications of the practice in a variety of settings; and (5) consider ways that the practice might be implemented in his own personnel work program.

This particular Personnel Services Review Series is entitled, "Innovations in the Supervision and Training of Counselors." The series will contain about ten issues. Each issue will focus on an innovation which has direct relevance for the training and supervision of counselors. The application of these innovations to both the pre-service and in-service training and supervision of counselors will be considered. The series is intended to be used by counselor educators, state department personnel and guidance and/or pupil personnel administrators in the development of programs to assist counselor trainees and practicing counselors learn and improve counseling skills.

MICRO-COUNSELING

DO YOU RECOGNIZE THESE PROBLEMS?

As you help practicing counselors and counselor trainees develop new counseling behaviors, you may sometimes feel that:

It is difficult to communicate the desired new behavior to the learner.

The learner tends to be overwhelmed by the complexity of the counseling process.

It is difficult for you to give meaningful feedback to the learner.

Micro-counseling is a newly developed training procedure which has implications for the preceding training problems.

WHAT IS MICRO-COUNSELING?

Micro-counseling is a procedure for training counselors in which:

1. A specific counseling skill is identified as the learning objective.

2. Special materials are developed to help the learner understand the new behavior.

3. The learner has the opportunity to try-out his understanding of the behavior in a short counseling interview (often with coached clients).

4. The learner receives immediate, objective feedback from the supervisor (often through the use of video-taped recordings of the interview).

MODELS OF PRACTICE

Since micro-counseling has evolved from the application of micro-teaching in the training of teachers, it is helpful to first understand micro-teaching procedures.

The Stanford Model

The first micro-teaching model was developed at Stanford University by David Allen and associates.

The Stanford model is a training process which includes the following steps: (1) the student studies information describing the specific set of skills to be learned; (2) he then applies these skills in a teaching situation (with a small group of students for a short time); (3) the teaching interaction is video-taped; (4) the student views the video-tape with a trained supervisor who gives specific feedback on the student's performance; and (5) the student prepares and conducts another teaching session (Borg, 1968A).

The Minicourse

The second model of micro-teaching has been developed which, although basically like the original Stanford model, employs a different type of feedback

process. In this model, the feedback and evaluation of the student's teaching behavior is conducted by the student himself using pre-taped models which illustrate examples of the desired behavior This form of micro-teaching is illustrated in the "mini-course" being developed by the Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development (Borg, 1968A).

Micro-Counseling: Attending Behavior, Reflection and Summarization of Feelings

Ivey (1968A) reports the use of micro-counseling with pre-practicum students to help in the transition from the classroom to the practicum experience. In this application, research was conducted to test the effectiveness of micro-counseling in the development of three specific counselor behaviors. These behaviors were: (1) attending behavior, (2) reflection of feelings, and (3) summarization of feelings Attending behavior involves awareness and responsiveness to the verbal and non-verbal communication of the client and the ability to communicate that awareness to the client. Specific behavior included eye contact, postural position, movements, and gestures, and verbal following behavior in which the counselor follows the client's preceding comment without introducing new data.

In this micro-counseling application, the trainee first conducted an interview which was video-taped, he then read a manual designed to describe attending behavior, next viewed his initial tape and pointed out examples of attending behavior to the supervisor and, finally, the trainee and the supervisor reviewed the procedures of attending behavior together. Judges ratings indicated the group trained using micro-counseling exhibited a higher degree of attending behavior and the clients rated this group as being more effective.

The micro-counseling model used by Ivey to research the effectiveness of micro-counseling in the teaching of reflection and summarization of feelings differed from the model used for attending behavior. This model included more counseling activity using both role-playing with the supervisor and two more counseling sessions with the client. After these experiences, the supervisor and the trainee reviewed video-tapes of the interaction and identified accurate instances of the desired behavior.

Micro-Counseling: Communication of Test Results

Another use of micro-counseling was its application to the training of pre-practicum students in the communicating of test results (Miller, Morrill & Uhlmann). This training emphasized the following behaviors: (1) ability to listen and respond to cues given by the client; (2) ability to be brief and concise when talking about test related information; and (3) ability to relate test information to the client's own experiences and understanding.

Trainees worked in pairs in this micro-counseling experience. They first read a manual which described the desired behaviors and then viewed video-taped models which provided both positive and negative examples of the behaviors. Finally, the trainee role-played five-minute sessions which were video-taped and played back immediately for evaluation and discussion.

The trainees who had received no training beyond regular course work, conducted video-taped counseling test interpretation interviews. Judges ratings on the extent to which the desired behaviors were exhibited in these interviews were significantly higher for the micro-counseling group.

GENERALIZATIONS: WHAT GENERAL FINDINGS ARE THERE FROM THE EXPERIENCE WITH MICRO-TEACHING AND COUNSELING

1. Micro-counseling can help reduce the amount of time required to train new counselors and to up-date the skills of practicing counselors Short exposures to micro-counseling have led to significant changes in counselor behavior. Research has also indicated that skills developed in the micro-counseling situation do transfer to more general situations.

2. Micro-counseling provides an opportunity to gain counseling experience in a less complex situation. Because of the reduced length of the interview and the focus on specific counseling behaviors, the counselor can concentrate on specific skill development without the pressure of other factors. This can help reduce the anxiety of the trainee.

3. Since a micro-counseling session concentrates on the learning of a

specific counseling skill, the entire efforts of the trainee can be centered on this specific learning.

4. Another advantage of the narrow focus of the micro-counseling session is the responsibility it places on the trainer to identify the desired learning outcome in behavioral terms.

5. Micro-counseling adds objectivity and specificity to the supervisory process. The counselor trainee and the supervisor have a common understanding of the desired counseling behavior and feedback is based on viewing the video-taped interview.

6. Because micro-counseling sessions are brief and are video-taped, the counselor trainee receives immediate feedback and reinforcement without undue stress on the supervisor's time. Often in traditional approaches where interviews are longer, it is difficult for the supervisor to give immediate feedback to a trainee on his performance.

7. Micro-counseling employs several learning procedures which increase the probability of learning occurring. These procedures include the use of models to clarify the desired behavior from others, and immediate positive reinforcement through an analysis of the video-taped interview with the practicum supervisor.

8. Micro-counseling lends itself to research on the effectiveness of learning procedures because it deals with the development of specific skill in a controlled counseling situation.

ACTION POSSIBILITIES AND APPLICATIONS

1. The major application of micro-counseling to date has been with pre-practicum students. The rationale for its use is that it provides a bridge between the classroom and practicum experiences. The opportunity to practice and develop skills through micro-counseling sessions can help reduce the anxiety surrounding the beginning of practicum. Some skills which have been stressed in this pre-practicum application are (1) attending behavior, (2) reflection of feelings and (3) summarization of feelings (Ivey, 1968A).

2. Micro-counseling sessions can be continued throughout the practicum experience to facilitate specific skill development. A specific application is training counselors to report test results (Miller, Morrill, & Uhlmann). Other sessions could be developed for use as an ongoing part of the practicum program.

3. Micro-teaching has been used extensively for the in-service training of teachers. This application would also be possible in counseling. Two possible models here are the use of consultants to provide feedback and evaluation, and the use of self-contained units which have built in self-evaluation components. Because micro-counseling sessions provide short, self-contained training experiences with the opportunity for practice and feedback, they can be used in a limited time span such as a day training program. This characteristic lends itself to in-service training programs.

4. Micro-counseling can also be used for supervision and evaluation activities in the work setting. Personnel work administrators are often charged with the responsibility of evaluating those counselors whom they supervise. Using micro-counseling in this supervisory process provides an objective framework for feedback and evaluation.

5. A final application of micro-counseling is in the selection of counselors and counselor trainees. This application has been used previously in teacher education. Since micro-counseling gives objective samples of counselor behavior, it can provide useful data to be considered in the selection process.

IMPLEMENTATION

1. The first step in implementing a micro-counseling experience is to decide which specific counseling skill will be learned through the experience. It is important to select a skill which can be clearly described and communicated. Therefore, some aspects of counseling, e.g., introducing a test, may lend themselves more to micro-counseling than others, e.g., helping relationship.

2. After the skill to be learned has been identified, the specific learning objectives must be specified. These include the identification of those counselor behaviors and understandings which must be learned to become competent in the use of the particular skill.

3. Once the learning objectives have been defined through careful analysis of the skill to be learned, a specific learning model must be developed. Although several micro-counseling models have been presented, you may want to adapt elements of these models, thus deriving a new model particularly designed to meet your special needs. Any model which might be developed would include learning experiences to help the trainee understand the skill, and the opportunity to try out the skill, objective feedback based on recording of the interview and another opportunity to further practice the skill.

4. Any micro-counseling model indicates the need for specially developed training materials which clearly specify the behavior to be learned. These may be written manuals, programmed role play experiences and/or video-taped models. You will want to develop feedback instruments which can be used by both the supervisor and trainee as they evaluate the extent to which the trainee is exhibiting the desired counseling skill.

5. Objective feedback based on a common understanding of the counseling skill is an essential element of any micro-counseling model. You will want to develop feedback instruments which can be used by both the supervisor and trainee as they evaluate the extent to which the trainee is exhibiting the desired counseling skill.

6. Since micro-counseling experiences are designed to facilitate the learning of a specific counseling skill, it is possible to design ways of evaluating the extent to which these experiences are effective. It is important to design a method of evaluation for these experiences by using pre- post-measures of counselor behavior. Others have used both judges and clients ratings of counselor behavior. You will want to design an evaluation model which can help in the evaluation of the micro-counseling experience you have designed.

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